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INDIAN PROBLEMS

Nº I

CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

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1817

CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?

INDIAN PROBLEMS

NO. I

Can Russia invade India?

BY

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

BENGAL STAFF CORPS (RETIRED)

LATE COMMANDING AT DELHI

'Afghanistan merits the character given to Spain by the first Henry of France: Invade with a large force, and you are destroyed by starvation; invade with a small one, and you are overwhelmed by a hostile people.'

Sir Henry Durand

Westminster

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND CO.

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1895

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CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?

in case of war between Russia and ourselves, would once have been hers, falling to us; and the advantages which we must have enjoyed, being wilfully handed over to her.

The inevitable end of the policy which for the last nineteen years we have been pursuing on India's north-western and northern frontiers is an advance on the Oxus; and, when that has been accomplished, our troops will be in exactly the same position as my hypothetical Russian Army on reaching the Indus—with their communications lost, their stores exhausted, with no local source of supply from which to replenish them, and with a warlike and hostile population in their rear. I do not deny that a small British force might penetrate to the left bank of the great Central Asian stream, but I do dispute that it could accomplish anything when it got

there: indeed, there would be nothing for it to accomplish—Russia being, so far as we are concerned, invulnerable in Asia, just as we are invulnerable, so far as she is concerned, in India,—and we should have exchanged our old frontier, covered by a river, a desert, and a double range of mountains, and close to our own rich and populous provinces, for a new frontier, also, indeed, covered by a river and a desert, but with those same mountains behind instead of in front of it, and with more than 600 miles of the most difficult country in the world between it and the State to whose security it will be supposed to contribute,—and all this merely to forestall Russia in the possession of territory that is as useless to her as to us, and which, apart from a desire to blind and delude us, she can have no reason for menacing.

I believe the Russian Government to be fully aware of the hopelessness of any scheme for invading British India, and to be free from all intention of making the attempt; but so long as it shares our belief that its country and ours are natural enemies, so long will it be its aim and its interest to embarrass and weaken us in Asia. And how can it do this more effectually than by giving us, from time to time, just such sufficient cause for alarm as shall induce us to scatter our troops more and more widely, and to squander more and more of our money on worse than useless enterprises—or rather India's money, a different and far more serious thing, since financial trouble, in the case of a country administered by a foreign power, means political discontent.

In playing this game, Russia runs no risk.

What does it matter to her whether a few thousand British troops are on her side of the Hindu Kush or not? She knows that they can never strike at any vital point of her dominions, and so can afford to look on and laugh in her sleeve whilst our generals add 50,000 or 60,000 square miles to the British Empire, and the Indian Finance Minister racks his brain to discover some new source of revenue from which to pay the price of their militant patriotism.

As I have said, within their own natural boundaries, both States are invulnerable; but Russia has over us the immense advantage that she knows her own security, whilst we distrust ours. Whether, however, her policy of tempting us on to our hurt is really a wise one, is a very different question, and one on which I shall have something to say in Tract No. 3.

One word in conclusion. Many of my old brother officers share, I am fully convinced, the views expressed in these pages, though the trammels of official position, or preoccupation with other matters, or unwillingness to rush into controversy, has hitherto kept them silent. To one and all of these I now appeal to come forward and give me their support in this attempt to dispel an error which is endangering the prosperity, it may be even the existence, of that great Indian Empire which every Englishman desires to strengthen and uphold,—none more warmly than those who are not afraid to resist the temptation to extend it.

H. B. Hanna.

March 21, 1895,
Junior Army and Navy Club,
St. James's Street, S.W.

CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?

CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

THE belief that an invasion of Great Britain's Indian Empire by Russia, through Afghanistan, is, if not a probable, at least a possible contingency, has more to do than even the depreciated rupee with the financial difficulties of that great dependency, since it is in consequence of that belief that India's frontiers are being steadily pushed forward into regions which can contribute nothing to their own administration; that fortifications, large and small, are being erected on different points of those frontiers; that large and ever larger numbers of men are being concentrated in countries which cannot

supply their wants, thus necessitating a corresponding increase in military transport of all kinds; and that railways are being constructed at enormous cost, through practically uninhabited and uninhabitable wastes. Yet that belief is, to this day, only an assumption, and owes its hold on the public mind largely to the facts enumerated above. That viceroys and commanders-in-chief in India should extend her frontiers, multiply her fortifications, isolate her troops in inaccessible mountain fastnesses, and sink her money in unproductive railways, is sufficient in itself to convince most men of the reality and imminence of a danger against which all these disastrous precautions have to be taken; and there can be no doubt that they exercise a similar influence on the minds of their own authors. But a belief, however firmly held and however strongly attested, should not be accepted as true unless it can be shown to rest upon proofs; and this

belief, that India is open to attack on her north-west frontier, has never yet been proved, in the only way which can give it a claim to acceptance by reasonable minds, viz. by showing how and at what cost she can be successfully invaded.

Two men of exceptional military knowledge and ability, Sir Charles MacGregor and Sir Edward Hamley, have, indeed, addressed themselves to the task, and both, though in very different degrees, ended their investigations by giving their assent to the popular creed; but the one confined his attention to a consideration of Russia's military resources and to the mapping out of her onward movements, stage by stage, without any attempt to show under what conditions those movements would have to be made; and the other wasted his admirable reasoning on erroneous data.

Now, Russia's capacity to put into the field

a force sufficiently large and well-equipped to deserve to be pronounced adequate to so great an undertaking as the invasion of India, is only *one* of the points which must be taken into account before we can venture to affirm that she will, or may, at some future time, actually enter upon it; and conclusions which rest upon entirely mistaken impressions as to the nature of the country which Russian forces, marching by way of the Bolan (and Sir E. Hamley denies that they are likely to come by any other), would have to traverse, after issuing from the mountains, before they could reach the Indus, carry with them, with respect be it spoken, no weight at all.

Experience, however, I shall be told, is the best of all proofs, and that India has been invaded not once, but many times, is an historical fact which it would be absurd to question.

No man has more respect for the teachings

of experience than I, but if there is one thing more than another that I have learnt from it, it is that we are never safe in connecting conclusions drawn from one set of circumstances with a second set differing from the first in any essential particular; and surely the difference is enormous between the India of the days of Alexander the Great, or of Timor the Tartar, or of Baber, or of Nadir Shah, divided, generally in name, and always in fact, into many states, each actively or passively hostile to all the rest, and Great Britain's Indian Empire, no longer weak by internal divisions, but strong in the unity of its government, and one for all purposes of national defence; nor is there much likeness between the lightly equipped, swift-moving hosts[1] of Greek, or

[1] In much more recent days, the old style of warfare has been witnessed. Captain John Wood, of the Indian Navy, writing in 1838, tells us, that the forces of Morad Bey, the Chief of Kunduz, 15,000 strong, composed entirely of cavalry, were well adapted to predatory warfare, for which

Moghul, or Persian, which successfully penetrated beyond the Indus, and the highly organised, slow-moving Russian army which we are asked to believe may, some day, do the same.[1]

It sounds a paradox to say that the vast improvement that has taken place in the implements and appliances of war since the latest of the successful invasions of India, has diminished, to an extent which it is difficult to estimate, the probability of her ever being invaded again; yet the seeming paradox is a simple truth, which, in the course of these pages, I trust I shall be

neither infantry nor guns were essential, the horses, though small, having great power, being able to endure much fatigue for ten successive days, carrying grain for themselves and riders. But a Russian army could not advance upon India after this fashion.—H. B. H.

[1] 'An ancient army had its impedimenta, but these were playthings in comparison with the ordnance train of a modern army; the toil which it inflicts whenever difficulties are to be overcome, on the not degenerate soldier of the nineteenth century, must be witnessed to be comprehended.'—Sir H. Durand.

able to bring home to the minds of my readers.

The belief in the vulnerability of India's north-west frontier rests, I repeat, upon assumptions, and before it can be pronounced safe to hold or preach it, a minute and careful study must be made of all the conditions under which an invasion of that country would have to be carried out. Few persons have the time to do this for themselves; I venture, therefore, to submit to all who are interested in the subject the results of such a study, undertaken by one who, at least, possesses this qualification for the task—a personal acquaintance with the countries he will have to describe and the difficulties he must weigh and estimate.[1]

[1] On the army staff, I marched with General Biddulph's force by the Bolan to Kandahar, and thence to the Helmand, returning to India by the Thal Chotiali route; and in the second phase of the war, I was at Kabul, going and returning by the Khyber.—H. B. H.

To make my argument simpler, clearer, and, in the end, I hope, more convincing, I will assume that we are standing where we stood in 1876, when Quetta was only a little Beluchi town, and when, except on the Peshawar side, our north-west frontier, for defensive purposes, was practically the Indus, borrowing only from the situation, as it is to-day, two features—the connection of Peshawar with Karachi by railway,[1] and the protected bridges at Attock and Sukkur, which secure to our armies the command of both sides of the great river over which they have been thrown.

[1] The connection between Peshawar and Multan is a double one since the construction of the Sind-Sagar railway, on the left bank of the Indus.—H. B. H.

CHAPTER II

INDIA'S NATURAL DEFENCES, AND THE AFGHAN PASSES

MILITARY writers recognise three great natural lines of defence: a desert, a mountain range, and a river, the relative value of which accords with the order in which I have placed them, and their absolute value, on the extent of the first and the number and capacity of its springs; on the height, depth, and ruggedness of the second; and on the width and rapidity of the third.

Mountains and a river guard the whole length of India's north-west frontier, and to these for more than three-fourths of the distance is added the desert; whilst each of these natural defences is of extraordinary

strength—the mountains lofty, rugged, and barren, their defiles narrow and of great length; the river wide and rapid at all times, and in the rains, or during the melting of the snows, dangerous for boats and impossible to bridge; whilst the desert varies in width from 50 miles to 160, and is traversable only on the two or three lines along which wells are to be met with.

From Peshawar on the north-east to Dadar on the south-west, the great mountain ranges which form India's first line of defence against invasion, are about 650 miles in length, and are pierced only by five passes, through which any large body of men could possibly move. Other so-called roads there are, used no doubt by the inhabitants, but these are the merest tracks, from which trade shrinks back affrighted, and by which no invader ever has attempted, or ever will attempt, to march.

To these five routes—the Bolan, the Thal

Chotiali, the Gomul, the Kuram, and the Khyber — we may therefore confine our attention, for if it can be shown that through none of these is an invasion of the India of to-day possible, the most timid Russophobist will hardly make himself unhappy about any other; but before sketching the distinctive features of each, I must point out that the Khyber, the Kuram, and the Gomul present quite a different aspect, according as we consider them from the point of view of an Anglo-Indian army advancing from India to assist or subdue Afghanistan, but with no ulterior object, or of a Russian army moving down upon India. To us, their length is represented by the actual number of miles from Peshawar to Kabul, or from Rawal Pindi to Kabul, or from Multan *viâ* Dera Ishmael Khan and Ghazni to Kabul; to them, Ghazni or Kabul are but stages in a journey, which begins either at Kandahar or on the

Oxus; and this difference carries with it yet another in the case of the Khyber, namely, that to us that route is open all the year round, whilst to the Russians it can be but a summer road, since the Ghazni Highlands, no less than the Hindu Kush, are blocked by snow from October to April.

The reason for the distinction which I have just drawn, the true significance of which will be apprehended by my readers later on, is clear: *we* possess in Peshawar, or Rawal Pindi, or Multan, a true base of military operations, and in Kabul or Ghazni *the Russians* will possess nothing of the kind.

How would it be possible, for instance, to concentrate 100,000 or 150,000 troops at Kabul when that city suffers itself every winter from scarcity, and at all times has to draw part of its food-supply from Ghazni? It could not support the garrison which its conquerors must keep within its walls, and

there would not be a bushel of flour or a pound of meat to spare for the needs of a huge field force; neither could the whole kingdom of Kabul do more than furnish an insignificant fraction of the transport that would be required to enable it to move. Nor can Ghazni be accepted as such an army's starting-point. It, too, must be garrisoned, and that garrison must absorb, at Kabul's cost, all its surplus provisions, leaving nothing over for troops passing through on their way to the Khyber, or concentrating there before beginning their march by the Gomul.

Of course neither at Kandahar nor on the Oxus would Russia possess a true base, but as that disadvantage is common to all the routes by which her advance on India must be made, and as I have no intention, and certainly no need, to carry my inquiry into the difficulties in the way of such an advance, beyond the limits of Afghanistan,

I shall not try to determine the exact spot where her great military adventure may be held to begin.[1] For my purpose it will be sufficient if I can convince my readers that Afghanistan can hardly feed her own people, and has nothing to spare to outsiders, whether they call themselves conquerors or friends. A few facts will, I think, place my contention beyond dispute.

When the leading column of Sir John Keane's army of 9500 men entered Kandahar in 1839, having exhausted its supplies by the way, grain rose to thirteen-pence the pound, and the inhabitants of the city were reduced to starvation, without relieving the British

[1] It was not the capture of Sebastopol, nor even the immense losses of the Russian armies in the Crimea, which compelled the Emperor Nicholas to sue for peace in 1855, but the drain on his resources consequent on the having to carry on so vast a struggle in a remote corner of his empire; and what is the distance between Moscow or St. Petersburg and Sebastopol compared to that which separates European Russia from British India?—H. B. H.

commander of the painful necessity of keeping his troops on half rations.[1]

When Sir F. Roberts occupied Kabul in September 1879, he had with him but 6000 men, yet he had to send out troops far and wide to gather in supplies for man and beast; and in the process he drove the inhabitants to such fierce despair—for to sur-

[1] Famines are of frequent occurrence in Afghanistan. Dr. Bellew, in his *Journal of a Political Mission to Afganistan*, tells us of one which he witnessed in Kandahar in the year 1857. 'Whilst traversing the filthy lanes of the city . . . we had full and painful proof of the sufferings of the people from the combined effects of scarcity and pestilence. . . . This terrible pestilence and famine continued with unabated severity for fully six weeks after our arrival, and the daily scenes of hideous suffering we encountered on our way to the open country proved a most painful ordeal. . . .

'The sufferings and privations of the Kandaharis during this famine were really terrible. . . . During this trying period we had considerable difficulty in feeding our horses and baggage animals, and for several days could get no grain whatever, and but small supplies of fodder. The price of barley was four seers the rupee, . . . wheat-flour sold at two seers the rupee. . . . At such prices, the poor could get no flour at all, and for several months subsisted on clover and lucern, wild herbs and mulberry leaves, which they as often ate uncooked as cooked.'

render to us, no matter at what price, their little stores of grain and bhoosa (chopped straw) was to leave their families, their live stock, and themselves, to die of hunger during the ensuing winter—that the whole country rose in arms against our exactions, and, driving before them the detachments scattered through the hills, shut us up in the Sherpur cantonments, whence we were only released by Sir Charles Gough's bold yet well-considered advance from Jugdalak to our assistance.[1]

I could multiply instances to prove the poverty of Afghanistan, but one general statement covers all—*with the exception of a few hundred seers of rice, a good deal*

[1] It is true that the attack on Sherpur was delivered and repulsed before Gough could reach the scene of action, but it was the knowledge that he was close at hand, and the exaggerated rumours as to the strength of his force, born of the very audacity of his advance, which determined the moment of that attack, and was the cause of the complete disbandment of the tribesmen that followed its failure.—H. B. H.

of fruit and a little honey, that country exports no food-stuffs of any kind. This fact once grasped, it becomes self-evident that wherever the base of a Russian army advancing upon India by the Khyber or the Kuram may be, it is not at Kabul, and that I am justified in treating their march as beginning at Kandahar, since I am not prepared to complicate the calculations which I shall shortly lay before my readers, by tracing it backwards to Herat, and from Herat to the Caspian Sea.

Route I

From Kandahar to Multan by the Bolan Pass and the Desert of Beluchistan. Distance *viâ* Jacobabad and Sukkur 678 miles, *viâ* Jacobabad, Rajunpoor, and Mithankot 666 miles, *viâ* Jacobabad and Dera Ghazi Khan 605 miles.

Since the appearance of Sir H. Rawlinson's famous Memorandum up to the present day, when the writings of various adventur-

ous travellers have brought the roads by the Baroghil and Dura Passes into public favour, the attention of the politician of the 'scientific frontier' school has been chiefly absorbed by the Bolan route, on the defence of which, at their instigation, a large proportion of the vast sums of money which have been sunk in fortifications and in strategical roads and railways has been lavished.

After emerging from the smiling Kandahar Valley, this route runs for 70 miles over a stony waste, intersected by weird-looking hills, yet sufficiently open for several columns to move over it simultaneously, and crosses the Khwaja Amran Range—the ascent most precipitous, the descent, except near the summit, fairly easy—into the Pishin Valley, a tableland 5000 feet above sea-level 'which can scarcely feed a single cavalry regiment,'[1] and in which, for three or four marches, the water is brackish.

[1] Captain C. Hoskyns, R.E.

There are three roads over the Khwaja Amran Range, of varying length and difficulty, all of which we will suppose the Russians to use, but after passing Quetta, their advance must be made in one long line. The Bolan, the pass from which this route takes its name, is 59 miles in length, offers few camping-grounds, and is in parts excessively steep and narrow; in rugged savageness, and utter barrenness, it may, perhaps, be rivalled by other Afghan defiles—to excel it is impossible. In the hot weather the heat in it is excessive, in the rains it is swept by fierce and sudden floods; the road is shingle and grit, strewn with stones and small boulders, most trying to the horses and transport animals, wearing the feet of the bullocks to the quick; and again and again the road crosses the river, through which the men must wade up to their waists in water.[1]

And yet the worst difficulties of this route

[1] In one march alone, fourteen times.—H. B. H.

do not begin till the invading army enters on its march across the plain, 160 miles broad, which still separates it from the Indus, the plain over which Sir E. Hamley, misled by information obtained from 'the best authority'—how one would like to know that authority's name!—actually believed troops could march 'on a wide formation, closely accompanied by all their trains and baggage.'[1] That plain for 115 miles is either arid desert or low jungle, and for the remaining 45 miles, pestilential marsh. Wells there are, but at long distances apart, necessitating several marches of 16 and one of 26½ miles, and so soon exhausted or so difficult to draw from, on account of their great depth, that the Bengal column of the army of the Indus, already mentioned, which marched from Shikarpur to the Bolan in 1839, had to be broken up into eight detachments, the cavalry into half

[1] Lecture on the Strategical Conditions of our Indian North-West Frontier.

regiments; and to crown all, the water in several instances is so brackish that the parched horses refuse to drink it. Near some of these wells there are villages, each with its tiny plot of cultivated ground, but these can afford no supplies. To wander from the track which leads from one well to another is to lose oneself in an utterly waterless wilderness, and to die either of thirst or by the sword of the Beluchi robber.'[1]

How, then, can an advance on a wide formation be a possible thing? The actual advance will be in small bodies,[2] which, struggling painfully forward, must fall an easy prey to an Anglo-Indian army, whether

[1] 'If the traveller wanders from the right direction, he may lose his way and die in the waterless tract. Guides must always accompany every detachment.'—Major Hough.

[2] 'There is no insurmountable obstacle to the march of a large army,' (measured, surely, by Anglo-Indian ideas of large) '*by small detachments at a time in the cool months.*' —Sir H. Havelock's *War in Afghanistan.*

its commander elect to meet them at Jacobabad or at Sukkur.

Supposing, however, that the Indian military authorities should have determined to offer no opposition at either of these two points, but to defer their attack until the enemy were still further weakened in strength and reduced in numbers, our invaders, after concentrating at Jacobabad, could adopt one of three courses: they could cross the Indus at Sukkur and march on the left bank of that river, by district roads and the railway line, to Multan, a distance of 328 miles; or they might turn to the north-east and follow the frontier road, which runs between the desert and the Indus marshes, to the Mithankot ferry, and thence advance upon Multan—distance, 316 miles; or lastly, they might continue on the right bank of the river, as far as Dera Ghazi

Khan, effect its passage there, and, so, reach Multan, a distance of 255 miles. The latter route is the shorter, otherwise none has any advantage over the others. All are alike, unhealthy and destitute of supplies, and by each, in addition to the Indus, a second great river has to be passed—the Sutlej by the first and second; the Chenab by the third—besides a large number of nullahs, most of which must be bridged, or ramped, to enable the artillery to cross them.

There is a shorter road to Rajanpoor direct from Dadar, at the eastern mouth of the Bolan; but this was proved by the experience of the British troops, who had the misfortune to be sent by it in 1878, to be so unfit for the passage of even a very small force, that we need not take it into account when considering the possible movements of a large

army.[1] Whether the Russians will venture to make use of any of those, which I have thought it worth while to enumerate, is a question on which I shall throw more light later on.

Route II

From Kandahar to Multan, by the Khojak Pass, the Pishin Valley, the Kakar Hills, and Dera Ghazi Khan; commonly known as the Thal Chotiali Route—distance, 459 miles.

As far as Killa Abdullah, in the Pishin

[1] In 1878 it had been originally intended that both divisions of the Kandahar force should march from Mithankot to Dadar, but General Biddulph, commanding the troops that actually took this road, sent back so unfavourable a report, that it was hastily decided to divert the main body, under General Donald Stewart, to Sukkur, and to make the passage of the desert from that point. Any one desiring to obtain a clear insight into the conditions under which troops are moved in Beluchistan, will do well to read Biddulph's lecture, entitled 'March from the Indus to the Helmand and Back,' which he will find in vol. xxiv. No. 107, of the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution.* To the accuracy and moderation of this narrative, I can myself bear testimony.—H. B. H.

Valley, this route is identical with that which has just been described; but at that point it diverges from it and runs nearly due east, first crossing range after range of rugged hills, one of which attains a height of 8457 feet, and then traversing a district, which Sir C. MacGregor has described 'as consisting chiefly of a hot, arid wilderness, stretching as far as the eye can reach, unrelieved by water, trees, or even villages.'

There are low-lying, fairly open valleys between the ridges, where the traders, who once used this road, may have found sufficient forage for their camels; but the British field force, which returned to India this way in 1879, had to carry not only all ordinary supplies, but also grain for the transport animals, and, so long ago as 1505, the Emperor Baber complained of his cavalry having been starved in marching by the Thal Chotiali.

The Indus once crossed at Dera Ghazi Khan, only 43 miles will separate the invaders from Multan; but in these few marches there are two branch channels of the Indus to cross, the Chenab, and forty-five nullahs. The amount of pontoons and tressels which a Russian army advancing into India by any of the five routes, but more especially by the Gomul, the Thal Chotiali, and the Bolan, would have to carry with it must add enormously to its transport difficulties, whilst the endless bridging operations would greatly delay its movements.

Of the Thal Chotiali route, one cannot say positively that it is impracticable in winter, for in mild seasons it occasionally remains open; yet the uncertainty that must exist on this point will always deter a would-be conqueror of India from relying upon it as a line of communication with, and retreat upon, Russia, and without

communications, and at least a chance of salvation in case of defeat, it would be criminal madness to expose an army, great or small, to the chances of war. That this would be its position in summer, supposing it to enter India in the spring, or to be able to maintain itself there throughout the cold weather, is certain, since no European troops could cross the desert, narrow as it is, by this route between May and October.

Route III

From Ghazni to Multan, by the Ghwalari Pass, the Gomul River, and Dera Ishmael Khan—distance, 666 miles.[1]

This little-known road to India is closed at one end by heat in summer, and at the other end by cold in winter. A small body of men, if prepared to lose its communications, even before reaching India,

[1] The authority for this route is Broadfoot, the only European, I believe, who has ever traversed it.—H. B. H.

and to be helpless when it got there, might slip through the Gomul after the rains; but a large army must either expose its leading columns to the pestilential heat of the desert in September, or risk being cut in two by the snow which begins to fall in the Ghazni Highlands in October. In the matter of length, and of the physical difficulties to be overcome, it may be classed with the Bolan; and though Broadfoot, who travelled through it more than fifty years ago, speaks of ample forage for camels, he had in his mind the 1000 camels of the trade Kafila to which he had attached himself, or, at the most, the transport animals of a British regiment, not the hundreds of thousands of beasts of all descriptions, without which, as I have already said, no Russian army, numerically strong enough to venture into British India, could possibly move. The Gomul has, too, like both the preceding routes, the disadvantage of debouching into an arid desert,

intersected by ravines, ramifying into numerous fan-like branches, which would oblige the invaders to advance in long unwieldy columns, with a contracted front, exposed to the attacks of the British troops, who would be lying *perdu* in the one beautiful oasis which breaks the monotony of this desolate and deadly plain. And supposing these to be driven back and Dera Ishmael Khan occupied, they would still be confronted, like their friends at Dera Ghazi Khan, by the Indus, which they would have to bridge in the face of an enemy superior in every respect to themselves, with no better prospect before them, should they succeed in gaining the further bank, than that of having first to march for yet another fourteen days through a country where, with notice to the civil authorities duly given, an English regiment may, indeed, count on being fed, but out of which the hungry Russian host could squeeze not a single

day's supplies, and which is intersected by no less than 59 nullahs, five of them branches of the Indus; then to cross the Chenab, no mean river, an operation with which armoured steamers, carrying quick-firing guns, might seriously interfere; and lastly, to reduce Multan, where our troops would be concentrated in overwhelming force, and which would certainly, by that time, have been strongly fortified.[1]

Route IV

From Kandahar to Rawal Pindi, by Ghazni and Kabul, the Shutagardan and Peiwar Passes, the Kuram Valley, Thal, Kohat, and Kushalgarh—distance, 649 miles.

This route may be said to have been

[1] 'The Gomul does not present the insuperable difficulties of the Kuram, and could be made practicable, though not easy, for a column of all arms; at the best, it would still present much steep, broken extent of track, and many narrow passes.'—Sir E. Hamley.

In Hamley's opinion, the issues to this pass might be fully secured by the erection, at its mouth, of an entrenched camp, armed with heavy artillery.—H. B. H.

invented by Lord Lytton, for it was the importance which he attached to it, and the part which he assigned to it in the strategy of the second Afghan War, which introduced it to the notice of the vast majority of Englishmen. The experience of that war proved it to be but 'a byway to Kabul and Ghazni';[1] and, though its original patron clung to it to the last, and though Lord Roberts has pronounced it a road by which an enterprising commander could, at any season of the year, push on troops, already occupying positions in the Huriab Valley between the Peiwar Mountain and the Shutagardan, to Kabul[2]—an opinion which Sir John Watson felt it his duty to challenge[3]—it would be folly to argue from the

[1] Lord Roberts' Memorandum, No. 11 K.-L., dated Kabul, 29th May 1880.

[2] Lord Roberts' Memorandum.

[3] 'I am bound to challenge the military advantages of the Kuram Route, because I consider that, owing to the height of the Shutagardan, and the extreme cold in winter

fact that, in an emergency, a small British force could cross the latter pass in mid-winter, to the conclusion that a large Russian army might march at the same season of the year from Kabul to the Indus. The one is an operation of a few days, the other of many weeks; and though a few picked men, well-fed and clothed, might spend four or five nights in the snow, without shelter and with the thermometer below zero, with impunity, what would be the fate of the unclothed transport animals, and the half-clad camp-followers, when exposed for a far longer period to such intense cold? Their advance would be marked by many of the features of the French retreat from Moscow—whole companies of men and mules and camels buried in snowdrifts, or frozen to death in their sleep; every mile of

between that pass and the Peiwar Kotal, it is no use at all as a single line.'—Memorandum of Sir J. Watson, dated Kuram, 24th July 1880.

the road strewn with the bodies of those who had perished of fatigue and exhaustion, or been slain by the savage and hardy tribesmen, who, themselves unseen, would never lose sight of the invaders, and be always at hand to swoop down on every bewildered straggler, every worn-out transport animal, to cut the throat of the one and carry off the burden of the other.

'But why,' the impatient reader may exclaim, 'why try to relieve our fears by picturing misfortunes which will never overtake our foes, since Russian commanders are not so mad as to choose the winter for an advance upon the Indus *viâ* Thal?'

I admit it, but then that admission is tantamount to an assertion of my belief that by this route, as by the Gomul and the Thal Chotiali, they will never invade India at all; for if they time their march, as they undoubtedly must, to reach that river at the end of the rains, the passes through which

they had come would immediately close behind them, forbidding alike both succour and return.

Still, granting, for argument's sake, that a Russian army might some day hazard an advance on India by the Kuram route in the hot weather and the rains, its fate would be hardly more enviable than if it were to make the attempt in midwinter. What with burning sun and scorching winds between Kandahar and Kabul; what with the two great passes, one of them 11,500 feet high, and the terrible Hazaar Darakht Defile; what with floods, cholera, and fever in the Kuram Valley,[1] that army must in-

[1] 'It' [the occupation of the Kuram Valley] 'has proved very unhealthy to native troops.'—Lord Roberts' Memorandum.

'General Roberts lays much stress on the great heat between Jamrood and Gandamuck. I am inclined to think that from Kohat to Kuram it is, though not quite so bad, yet nearly equal in temperature. Last year our troops, marching down the Khyber, suffered terribly. Our troops did not march down from Kuram, but the Punjab contingents did, suffered much from heat, and lost 50 Sepoys from cholera.'—Sir J. Watson.

evitably be thoroughly exhausted before reaching Thal, where our troops, fresh, healthy, well-fed, well-equipped, would certainly be awaiting them. And if, to carry my concessions yet a little further, no attempt were to be made to destroy the invaders at this point, and, dragging with them their innumerable sick, they were to be allowed to toil on, unmolested, save by the savage inhabitants of the neighbouring hills, who would harass them incessantly, and fatten on their spoils; and if they were to possess themselves of Kohat, and to defeat the force marching from Peshawar, by way of the Kohat Pass, which would take them in flank and rear, and were once more to press forward through a rough, barren, sparsely populated region[1] to the Indus at Kushalgarh, what chance would they have of ever bridging its stream? And if, still adhering to the policy of leaving Nature to

[1] Lord Roberts' Memorandum.

fight our battles, we were to suffer them to carry out this operation, they would find the country on its left bank no more kindly or hospitable than that on its right, and be unable to halt for rest and re-organisation, much as they would need both before risking an advance on a great fortress, that could not be carried by a *coup-de-main*, and yet must be captured at once, if its besiegers are not all to perish of hunger before its walls.

Surely I am justified in thinking that this unexaggerated picture of the difficulties which beset the Kuram road gives me the right to erase it also from the list of routes by which Russia can invade our Indian Empire?[1]

[1] 'It is not likely, however, that any strategist invading India from his base (as it must be) at Kabul, would attempt to operate on a line 226 miles long, while we held a parallel one only 164. There need be little fear of an invasion by the Kuram line.'—Sir J. Watson.

'The issue of this pass in our territory at Thal is 100 miles from that of the Khyber. A column so strong and

Route V

From Kandahar to Peshawar, by Ghazni, and Kabul, and the Lataband, the Jugdalak, and Khyber Passes—distance, 490 miles.[1]

This line of advance is so superior to all the rest, in that it debouches from the mountains, not into the desert like the Bolan, the Thal Chotiali, and the Gomul, nor into a rough sterile district like the Kuram route, but into the cultivated fertile valley of Peshawar, that it can be no matter of surprise to us to find that it has been adopted by nearly every invader from Alexander to Nadir Shah.

Except the Thal Chotiali road, it is also the shortest, nevertheless it is long enough

well equipped as to be independent could not pass here, one that could not act independently would scarcely venture; and it is not likely, therefore, that any serious attack will be made by way of the Kuram.'—Sir E. Hamley.

[1] There is another road from Kabul to Jellalabad by the Khurd Kabul Pass, but this is longer and more tortuous. Our army used it in the first Afghan War, and began by using it in the second, but soon abandoned it.—H. B. H.

to entail upon any force that should advance by it the same climatic difficulties as have to be faced by the Kuram. By it, too, the Russians would have to suffer from sun and wind in the summer, from floods in the rains, and from sickness at most stages of their journey; and though there is no Shutagardan to surmount, the Lataband, the Jugdalak, and Khyber Passes are more difficult and fatiguing than the Bolan, nor are the tribes less warlike and greedy of plunder.

There is an open valley at Jellalabad where the two or three leading regiments might obtain a few days' supplies (we have already shown that Ghazni and Kabul could afford them none), but what are a few days' supplies for a couple of thousands of men compared to the boundless necessities of a couple of hundred thousands, on a march which must extend over several months? They would not make the difference of fifty camels to the transport department.

There are several positions in the passes which it would be easy to defend, notably Lundi Kotal, at the western end of the Khyber; but there would be no need for us to take advantage of these, since a fortified camp at the eastern mouth of that pass, almost within sight of our base, Peshawar, would seal it so effectually, that Sir E. Hamley was not exaggerating when he said that he did not see how a single Russian regiment could ever issue from it; and this being the case, I may count the Khyber also as a route by which no invasion need be feared. Nevertheless, so well aware am I of the existence of persons whose confidence in Russia's power to accomplish any object on which she has set her heart, let Nature oppose her as she may, I shall have hitherto failed to shake, that I will now proceed to make assurance doubly sure by showing the nature of the obstacles to an invasion of India which are inherent in the

constitution of a modern army; and as the Bolan route, notwithstanding its great length, offers the advantage that a force advancing by it may possibly retain its communications for a short time after entering the country which it has come to wrest from us, or at least to raise against us, *that* shall be the road along which I now invite my readers to follow the fortunes of our Russian friends, though not denying to them the liberty to use other lines of advance in combination with this one, should there appear to be any advantage to them in doing so.

CHAPTER III

SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT

I HAVE already let it appear that I believe the whole question of the feasibility of a Russian invasion of India to hinge upon considerations of supply and transport, but before addressing myself to this subject, it will be necessary to determine the size of the army for which supplies and transport will have to be provided, dividing it into four categories:—first, troops garrisoning Herat, Kandahar, and Kabul—in a word, occupying Afghanistan; secondly, troops engaged in keeping open communications between Herat and Kandahar, and between the base or bases of operations and the armies in the field; thirdly, troops actually

taking part in the invasion; fourthly, troops in reserve.

In the first category we must place not less than 40,000 men, viz. 10,000 at Herat, 10,000 at Kandahar, and 20,000 at Kabul, this larger figure being made necessary by the fierce and fanatical character of the people of that city, and also by the fact that, during six months of the year, its garrison must be self-sufficing, as, both the road to the north and that to the west being closed by snow, there would be no possibility of reinforcing it either from the Oxus or from Kandahar.

The lines of communication would absorb, at a moderate computation, 30,000 men; and, considering the wear and tear to which the invading armies would be subjected on their march, and the nature of the opposition that they must be prepared to encounter at the end of it, 150,000 will not be too many to assign for the actual in-

vasion of India, supposing one route only to be used, or 200,000 if two routes, or 230,000 if three routes are used; for it must not be forgotten that, on the two latter suppositions, although our troops, like those of Russia, would be divided, *our* power of concentration would be great, and *theirs, nil.* Finally, a reserve of 50,000 men would be necessary, since, in case of disaster, not a soldier could be taken from the garrisons or from the lines of communication, either for the purpose of reinforcing the defeated army or of covering its retreat.

Thus, assuming that the advance will take place by the Bolan alone, we shall have 270,000 fighting men and—taking the proportion of camp-followers, which our campaigning experience has shown to be indispensable, viz. 10,000 to every 11,500 soldiers—234,782 non-combatants to feed, during a period of time which would certainly extend from three months before the

actual advance on India until the invading force, having possessed itself of Multan, might be at last in a position to supply some, at least, of its own wants on the spot.

The whole of this calculation might be worked out, but to follow me through it would be so great a weariness to the reader, that I shall confine myself to showing what would be the amount of supplies, expressed in camel-loads, which the 150,000 men of the field army must carry with them from Kandahar to Multan by Jacobabad; and, as time is a chief factor in this calculation, my first step will be to ascertain how long it will take the aforesaid 150,000 men to accomplish this march.

The distance from Kandahar to Dadar, at the south-east mouth of the Bolan, is twenty, from Dadar to Jacobabad eight, from Jacobabad to Multan twenty-two marches, fifty in all, and the speed at which the invaders can advance will be regulated by the number

of men who can pass through the narrowest portion of the road in a day.[1] Nothing would be gained by sending them from Kandahar to Quetta in bodies of say 6000 men, if, on arriving at the latter town, each body had to be divided into two, of which the second must wait a day before it could follow the first; indeed, in many respects the advance would be easier if made in two

[1] As there are persons to whom the truth of this axiom may not be self-evident, I will prove it by a simple example. Let us suppose two bodies of twelve men each, the first, A, marching in line, the second, B, in single file, moving at a uniform pace, and in such a way that the line A is parallel with the leading man of file B, to be approaching two gateways, through each of which only one man can pass at a time; at the rate of five seconds to each man, it will take each body sixty seconds, or one minute, to clear its gateway; but, if body A has widened out into line once more, it will resume its march, no longer parallel with the leading man of body B, but with its last man, and every time a similar gateway had to be traversed it would be attended by a loss of fifty-five seconds, so that it would gradually fall behind body B. If, instead of a gateway, narrow lanes were entered, each body would remain in the single file formation, and neither would have gained any advantage over the other.—H. B. H.

detachments, a day's march apart, from the outset.

I will take 3000 troops, that means 3000 fighting men, with their accompanying camp-followers and transport animals, as the highest number that can enter the Bolan in any one day.

This will divide our invading army into fifty detachments, each a day's march behind its predecessor; to these fifty days we must add fifty more for the distance to be traversed, and the result will be 100 days as the shortest possible time in which to move a force of 150,000 men, with all its trains, supplies, and followers, from Kandahar to Multan and concentrate it there, and 75 as the average number of days during which each detachment would require to be fed, either on the march or whilst waiting at the end of it for the whole army to be once more reunited; and we are now in a position to determine the amount of transport with which

it must be furnished, taking, as the basis of our calculations, with the omission of the small decimal, ·05, the very low scale which Major Hough tells us was in force in the army of the Indus in the year 1839, viz. one camel, or two mules, for the conveyance of the food of every fighting man for thirty days[1]—

[1] This estimate gives only 2 lbs. of rice or flour, ¼ lb. dhal, ⅛ lb. ghee, and a little salt, per diem, to every fighting man or government camp-follower, and 1 lb. flour or rice, ¼ lb. dhal and a little salt, to each private follower. In Sir Donald Stewart's force in 1878-79, where the diet both for troops and camp-followers was more liberal, the proportion of camels to fighting men was as 1 man to 1·18 camels, but even in this calculation no provision is made for the carriage of meat, or spirits, or tea, or sugar, or hospital comforts of any kind for the men, nor yet for compressed hay for the horses, nor for grain for the transport animals. In an Anglo-Indian division of 12,500 men in which only the Europeans receive meat, they being in the proportion of seven Englishmen to sixteen natives, less than one to two, 1000 sheep and 820 bullocks are consumed per mensem. Therefore, the requirements of an army of 150,000, meat being consumed by them in the same proportion, would demand 12,000 sheep and 9840 bullocks for one month, and 30,000 sheep and 24,600 bullocks for two months and a half, or its equivalent in tinned meat, for the carriage of which mules or camels must be provided.—H. B. H.

the term fighting man to be understood to include, not only the soldier himself, but his share of the camp-followers and his portion of all the cavalry horses and gun cattle belonging to the force. Two simple proportion sums will give us the information we need; the first tells us that as thirty days' supplies are to 1 camel, so are seventy-five days' supplies to two and a half camels; the second tells us that as one man is to two and a half camels, so are 150,000 men to 375,000 camels, or to double that number of mules—in other words, that it will require 375,000 camels, or 750,000 mules to carry the barest necessaries of life for the Russian army which should attempt to invade India *viâ* the Bolan.

Next we must make provision for the carriage of tents, hospitals and all their miscellaneous equipments; for the soldiers' and officers' kits, for cooking utensils, entrenching tools, stable gear, pakhals (skins for the con-

veyance of water), for ammunition, for sappers' and heavy gun equipments, for engineer and artillery parks, for pontoon train, and for the thousand and one etceteras without which a modern army cannot stir. In the Afghan War of 1878-79-80, our artillery and engineer parks were very light, and we had no regular pontoon train, just a few pontoons, yet the proportion of transport for all the impedimenta, which may be classed under the general name of baggage, was ·574 camel for each fighting man. We will make it half a camel, which will add under this head 75,000 camels, or 150,000 mules, to the transport engaged in carrying food; and lastly, if the whole expedition is not to break down long before it reaches the Pishin Valley, provision must be made for the feeding of the transport animals themselves.

In the first phase of the second Afghan War, when such provision was neglected, the Bengal army alone lost 50,000 hired camels,

besides a large number belonging to Government; how many mules and ponies I have not been able to ascertain, but the mortality among them must have been great, since, on the renewal of the war in September 1879, it was found that the whole of the original transport had practically disappeared, and India had to be scoured, from the Punjab to the Dekkan, to provide carriage of any description for the small British armies advancing on Kabul. Experience, however, had worked repentance, and repentance, amendment; for, during the second phase of the war, 6 lbs. of grain per diem was allowed to each transport animal, whether camel, mule, or pony—an extremely moderate allowance, below which it would not be safe for the Russians to go.[1]

[1] I must insist again on the fact that there is, practically, no forage along this, or any other route through Afghanistan. When travellers talk of plenty of grazing for camels on certain stages of this or that journey, they have in their minds the Kafilas, which, at certain seasons of the year, traverse

Six pounds of grain per diem for 450,000 camels = 2,700,000 lbs., which figure multiplied by 75, the number of days for which we have to provide, gives 202,500,000 lbs. as the amount of grain that will have to accompany the army of the Bolan; and as a camel is reckoned to carry four maunds, or 320 lbs., and a mule half that load, we must add to our former figures 632,812 camels, or

the Afghan passes, and which number perhaps 1000 or 1500 camels. For these there may now and again be sufficient forage; but let not 1500 but 15,000 pass along the same road, and there will not be a bite left for the hundreds of thousands that, in the case of a great army, have still to follow. And even where forage of some kind exists, I can affirm, from my own experience, that there is frequently no time for grazing. On the march, of course, there can be no halting; full or starving, the unhappy beasts, strung together nose to tail in one long line, must struggle on till the camping-ground is reached, often too late for their drivers, after removing their burdens, to take them out to feed. I have seen hundreds of camels sink down when relieved of their loads, which they had borne for nine or ten hours at a stretch, and die of hunger and fatigue, or fall dead on the march, leaving their burdens to be piled on the backs of their already overweighted companions.—H. B. H.

1,265,624 mules, when our calculation will stand thus :—

	Camels	Mules.
For carriage of food, .	375,000	750,000
„ „ baggage, .	75,000	150,000
„ „ grain, .	632,812	1,265,624
Grand total, .	1,082,812	2,165,624

Of course camels carrying grain can no more live without food than camels carrying supplies or baggage, but I need hardly pursue these calculations further, the figures at which we have already arrived being, I venture to hope, sufficient to convince all sane minds that India has nothing to fear from such a force as Sir E. Hamley was contemplating when he wrote: 'We may be assured that an invading army of India, such as we cannot afford to despise, will be no improvised force, no barbarous horde, but truly formidable in numbers, organisation, and leadership.' Strong as this part of my case is, however, I will yet call my reader's attention to the fact that in the

movement of these 280,000 men—150,000 combatants and 130,000 non-combatants—and these 1,082,812 camels, I have allowed for not a single hitch, for not one day's delay. And what delays, what hitches there would be, should the problem we are considering ever be transferred from paper to real life! Delays from the sudden floods which sweep down the Bolan, from sickness, from the sheer exhaustion of the heavily laden and underfed cattle, from collisions with the Tribesmen—above all, from the confusion which, do what one may, must reign in so great a multitude, cooped up in a narrow space, and struggling, up-hill and down-hill, over rough and stony ground. What the sickness would be, it is appalling to contemplate, for the condition of the roads, and still more of the camping-grounds, would be one of indescribable filth;[1] and when, to

[1] Surgeon-General Alexander Smith, C.B., in his admirable report on the Medical Administration of the Afghan

the ordinary effluviæ polluting the air, we add that arising from the carcasses of the dead beasts with which the road would soon be strewn, who can doubt that cholera, dysentery and fever would soon be rife among troops and camp-followers, and that many a halt would become necessary to succour the sick and bury the dead? As for collisions with the Tribesmen, I know it is the fashion, in alarmist circles, to take it for granted that the Russians would advance through a friendly population, unharassed and unopposed, but I have never been able to discover the smallest ground for the

Campaign, refers to the extremely foul state of the camping-grounds from their previous occupation by Kafilas, and tells of the difficulty which the small British force, which he accompanied up the Bolan, experienced, in finding any hitherto unused plot of land on which to pass the night, and how, on one occasion, it had to descend into the shingly bed of the stream, where the water lay at a very short distance beneath the surface, and pitch its camp there, at the risk of its sharing the fate of the sappers' camp in the first Afghan War, which was swept away by a freshet.—H. B. H.

assumption. The hatred of Englishmen which is said, perhaps truly, to burn fiercely in every Afghan heart, is not of Englishmen as Englishmen, in contradistinction to other Europeans and Christians, but as members of the State which has twice carried famine and slaughter through their land; and if there is such a thing as persistency in national character, or in human nature itself, nothing is more certain than that the moment the Russians enter Afghanistan, as we entered it, sword in hand, they will be regarded with the same abhorrence, and meet with the same opposition. What Prince Lebanoff said of Shere Ali—'He was neither Russian nor British, but an Afghan, anxious to preserve the independence of his country'—is true of every Afghan to-day; and our own experience of the difficulties attendant on two attempts to subjugate them should save us from underestimating those which certainly await the

Russians should they ever venture on the same task.

But the plunder of India! that dazzling bait, which Russia will flash before the eyes of Asia; which, according to Sir C. MacGregor, is to draw to her banners 'every ruffian from the Caspian to the Indus, whose shoe-leather would hold out long enough to enable him to join them,' will it not disarm Afghan hostility? will not Ghilzais and Duranis, Kakars, and Afridis sweep down upon the rich plains of the Punjab and satisfy, at one and the same time, their greed and their revenge? Honestly, I do not think they will, not from lack of inclination, perhaps, but from lack of power. Even ruffians must eat to live, and how these volunteers are to get food, seeing that all the grain of central Asia and Afghanistan will have been swept into the Russian granaries, and how they are to carry supplies if they could obtain them, when every

four-footed creature that can bear a load on its back will have been seized for the Russian transport service, it is hard to understand. But supposing these little difficulties overcome, and that every ruffian has his camel or his mule to carry his supplies and supplies for it to carry, will these hordes be more welcome allies in the van of the invading army, or in its rear? In the van, like a swarm of locusts, they will strip the hillsides of every leaf, the valleys of every blade of grass, with which the Russian commissariat and transport departments had hoped to eke out the insufficient grain allowance of some at least of their unhappy beasts; in the rear, they will soon discover that it is easier and more profitable to lay hands on the wealth moving before their eyes, or abandoned by the wayside, than to toil through the desert in the wild hope of looting British India.

The Russians, if they are wise, will decline

the services of all such untrustworthy auxiliaries, and keep them at a distance by very summary measures; and if, as MacGregor anticipated, they succeed in raising a body of 20,000 fighting men in Afghanistan, these will form part of the regular forces whose fortunes we have been tracing, and share the difficulties which we have shown must prove fatal to their enterprise.

But belief in the impossible dies hard, and the statesmen and military men, and still more the general public, with whom the possibility of a Russian invasion of India has long been an article of faith, driven from the roads, will, I am well aware, fall back upon railways. A chorus of voices will remind me that before Russia will address herself to the invasion of India, she will have smoothed the way for the advance of her armies by the construction of railways on a gigantic scale. From the Caspian to Herat, from Herat to Kandahar,

from Kandahar to Kabul, and thence on to Gundamak in the one direction, and to the foot of the Khwaja Amran range (it is Sir C. MacGregor's guidance that I am following),[1] there would be one unbroken line, along which soldiers and stores will be forwarded swiftly and safely when the hour shall strike for Russia to carry into effect the plans, which she is credited with having nourished for the last hundred years or more.

I will not stop to calculate, even in the roughest manner, what such a programme would cost in time and money, but accept the axiom of Sir C. MacGregor, that where

[1] 'Russian railways would have been made from Farah to the west foot of the Khojak, as far as possible from the Oxus towards Kabul, and from Kabul to Gundamuck, and from Kabul to Kandahar, and from this line to the head of the Gomul. A good cart road would have been made from Herat to Kabul direct, from Ush to Chitral, and on down the Kunar valley' (MacGregor). These vast preparations would entail the construction of about 1800 miles of railway and 1650 miles of cart road through barren regions and over lofty mountains.—H. B. H.

warlike objects are in question, money is always forthcoming. Assuming, then, that the necessary number of millions has been flung into this gulf, and that, at the end of a given time, say twenty years from to-day, his railway scheme has been realised, we will now inquire what influence this fact would exercise on the amount of supplies and transport which the invading army must carry with it from Kandahar, or find awaiting it at Quetta, where we will suppose the terminus of the line to be. If, by making use of the railway up to that point, a saving of time were effected, there might be a corresponding diminution under these heads. But how do the facts stand?

It takes 100 trains, with an average of 30 vehicles per train, to move an English division of 12,500 men of all arms, with their baggage, tents, and ammunition, etc., and with full transport for the conveyance of the said impedimenta, but with no siege

or pontoon train, and without supplies either for troops, cavalry horses, gun cattle, or baggage animals. To move 150,000 men, under the same conditions, 1200 trains would be required. Now, nine up and nine down trains is the greatest number that can be run on our military lines, beyond the frontier; but I will suppose Russia to possess more rolling-stock and to manage her traffic better than we do, and that she will therefore be able to run twelve trains each way in the twenty-four hours, instead of nine, on which basis it will take her exactly 100 days to bring her army from Kandahar and concentrate it at the point where its march must begin, whither a portion of its supplies will have preceded it by train, whilst the remainder will be pouring in by road; the proportion of train-borne and camel-carried supplies being determined by the amount of transport which will be required when the army starts from its new

base, for as the transport animals, except the 75,000 allotted to the baggage, which accompany the troops (be it noted, in passing, that this figure requires doubling, as mules would have to be substituted for camels),[1] must perforce make the whole journey on foot, it would be a waste of power to let them perform its first stage

[1] Under any circumstances much of the transport must consist of mules, ponies, and bullocks, not only on account of the impossibility of procuring the enormous number of camels that would be required, but also because the latter animal is ill-adapted to a journey which begins in the highlands of Afghanistan and ends in the deserts of Beluchistan. 'It was ordered,' wrote Sir Michael Kennedy, Controller-General of Transport and Supply, in his valuable Report of October 6th, 1880, 'that preference should be given to mules and ponies, restricting as much as possible the acquisition of camels; for the experience of the previous campaign had demonstrated that the camel of the plains was unsuited for the hard work and rigorous climate baggage animals would have to endure . . . in northern Afghanistan.' [This is as true of the camel of the plains of the Oxus as of his kinsmen of the plains of the Indus.] 'Subsequent experience has also shown that the hill camel is very little better, at least in our hands' [would Russian hands be gentler?] 'and in the manner we are compelled to work him with troops.'—H. B. H.

unladen, so that only such supplies as exceed their carrying capacity will have been previously accumulated at Quetta.[1]

Now, as Kandahar is twelve marches from Quetta, 150,000 men, marching in bodies of 3000, would concentrate at the latter town on the 62nd day, and the average during which the whole force would require to be fed, either moving or waiting, would be 37 as against 50 if the journey were performed by rail; and a force marching by road to Quetta would have an advantage over a force conveyed thither

[1] Return of the Russian Army of the Bolan, as moved by rail, calculated on the basis of an Anglo-Indian division:—

Officers.	Non-Com. Officers, rank and file.	Followers.	Cavalry Horses and gun cattle.	Guns.	Baggage mules.	Dhandies and dhoolies for sick.
7500	142,500	130,000	30,000	360	150,000	8800

In India we allow sick carriage (Dhoolies and Dhandies) at 5 per cent. for troops and 1 per cent. for followers.—H.B.H.

by rail as regards time, which means for the latter an absolute increase in supplies, whilst in the matter of transport the decrease, if any, would be so small as to exercise no appreciable influence upon the problem we are trying to solve.[1]

But even if the balance of advantages were the other way, it would be unwise to move an army by rail in a country where, owing to the nature of the ground and of the climate, landslips and floods are of frequent occurrence, and where warlike tribes, hungry for spoil and enraged at the

[1] 'Railways are undoubtedly wanting in some of the characteristics of a good line of communication; we should regard them as nothing beyond excellent lines of supply. They can never supersede the ordinary roads in war, as these are indispensable for marching and manœuvring, and are the only lines by which an army, compelled to retire, can fall back on its reinforcements and reserves.'—*The Organisation and Administration of Lines of Communication in War*, by Colonel G. H. Furse, C.B. The Etappen or Staging system, like the railway, could be used only as far as Quetta, and would give little relief to the transport.—H. B. H.

occupation of their territories, would border the line in its whole length, to guard against whose raids it must be strongly patrolled from end to end, by night as well as by day. However skilful the Russian engineers, however vigilant the troops on the communication, it would be little short of a miracle if bridges were not swept away or destroyed, embankments undermined or torn down, and rails pulled up, to the swift and complete dislocation of the whole of the military arrangements.

Once again I venture to believe that a study of the figures belonging to this branch of the subject will relieve the fears of those who, from ignorance of the actual facts of military railway transit, have allowed themselves to be persuaded that the Russians are only waiting for the extension of their lines into Afghanistan to burst like a resistless torrent through the passes and spread themselves over Northern India. Even if

a railway could hasten, instead of putting back the hour of the arrival of the invading army at Quetta, an accumulation of men and animals is not like an accumulation of water, which gathers strength, as it rises. Let any number of troops you will accumulate in a defile, they can only issue from it in a slender and harmless stream; and the same is true of the desert through which the Indus must be approached, whether the advance take place by the Gomul, the Thal Chotiali, or the Bolan. Nevertheless, I will now consider the whole question of the Invasion of India from the point of view of the Defence, as I have hitherto considered it from the point of view of the Attack, with the object of showing that the frontier which we abandoned when Lord Lytton occupied Quetta, and which, year by year and month by month, we are leaving further and further behind us, is the strongest with which any land has ever

been endowed, and the one which lends itself most kindly to the far-reaching plans of the strategist and the swift and sudden movements of the tactician.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEFENCE

HAVING examined the obstacles offered by Nature to a Russian invasion of India, and those which are inherent in the constitution of a large modern army, it remains to consider the artificial barrier against which that army's last strength would be spent—in other words, to indicate the steps which the Indian Government would have to take to complete the work of disintegration and destruction which our allies, Fatigue and Sickness, Hunger and Thirst, would have so well begun. Those steps need not be taken in haste—haste is often a blunderer and always a spendthrift — for we should have ample warning of the intended attack. The preparations for it would be on so

gigantic a scale and so far-reaching in their effects, that concealment would be out of the question; even the line it was to follow could not continue long in doubt, since the immense distances between the different routes, and the urgent need that must exist in so poor a country as Afghanistan to start the troops and their endless train of followers and transport animals as soon as possible on their march towards our frontier, would compel the Russian commanders to make their choice quickly, and also to abstain from feints, manœuvres belonging rather to tactics than to strategy and quite inadmissible where the deceptive movement would remove the feinting force hundreds of miles from the road it was ultimately to pursue, and add enormously to commissariat and transport difficulties, as well as to those arising from the very narrow time limits within which the advance could be made at all.

And if our preparations need not be made in haste, neither need they be on a gigantic scale, and I do not say this under the vulgar British delusion that one Englishman is as good as a dozen foreigners; I have every respect for Russian soldiers and for Russian generals, and, were we called upon to meet them on equal terms, I should agree with Sir C. MacGregor that we ought to stand towards them in a relation of numerical superiority; but there would be no equality between our men, fresh, healthy, well supplied with every necessary and comfort, and the weary, hungry, sickly Russian troops; and still less equality between their position, toiling in small parties through a waterless[1] desert, with their transport

[1] Poor in water as Nature has made the desert of Beluchistan, it would be our business to make it poorer still. The moment it became a certainty that a Russian army was on its way from Kandahar, the inhabitants of Dadar and all the villages on the caravan route would be removed, with their scanty belongings, to a place of safety

animals perishing by thousands, and their supplies running out day by day—and ours, behind the strong defences of Jacobabad, able to issue thence at will, and to overwhelm each detachment before the next could come to its aid.

The following table gives the number of troops that I believe would be found quite adequate for the defence of our frontier, supposing the bulk of the Russian army to succeed in reaching it, and their dispositions on the hypothesis that its line of advance would be the Bolan.

behind our line of defence, whilst their growing crops would be destroyed and all their wells blown up or filled in. During the continuance of the campaign these poor people would be kept in comfort, and at its close restored to their homes with an ample supply of seed-corn, and provisions to keep them till the new crops could be reaped, our engineers having first reopened the wells. Of course the Russians could reopen them too, but at the cost of much time—some of them are ninety feet deep—and time would be the one thing of most importance to them.—H. B. H

DISTRIBUTION OF BRITISH ARMY OF DEFENCE.

		Men.	Guns.
Jacobabad.	16 Cavalry Regiments, .	7,200	
	4 Batteries, R.H.A., .	600	24
	24 Infantry Regiments, .	18,000	
	4 Batteries, R.A., .	600	24
	3 Companies of Sappers,	300	
	Reinforcements for ordinary garrison, .	5,000	
		31,700	48
Sukkur.	24 Infantry Regiments, .	18,000	
	4 Batteries, Field Artillery,	600	24
	2 Companies of Sappers,	200	
	Armoured Steamers carrying quick-firing guns, . . .		
		18,800	24
Rajanpur or at Mithankot.	4 Cavalry Regiments, .	1,800	
	1 Battery, R.H.A., .	150	6
	12 Infantry Regiments, .	9,000	
	2 Field Batteries, .	300	12
	3 Companies of Sappers,	300	
		11,550	18
	Carried forward,	62,050	90

		Men.	Guns.
	Brought forward,	62,050	90
Dera Ghazi Khan.	4 Cavalry Regiments, .	1,800	
	1 Battery, R.H.A., .	150	6
	12 Infantry Regiments, .	9,000	
	2 Field Batteries, .	300	12
	3 Companies of Sappers,	300	
		11,550	18
Multan.	8 Cavalry Regiments, .	3,600	
	2 Batteries R.H.A., .	300	12
	24 Infantry Regiments, .	18,000	
	4 Field Batteries, . .	600	24
		22,500	36
Lahore.	4 Cavalry Regiments, .	1,800	
	1 Battery R.H.A., .	150	6
	12 Infantry Regiments, .	9,000	
	2 Field Batteries, . .	300	12
		11,250	18
	Total, .	107,350	162

The map which will be found at the beginning of this Tract shows, in a clear and simple manner, the extraordinary

strategic excellence of the position which I have supposed our troops to occupy, every post from Peshawar to Sukkur supporting and being supported by its neighbour, and all alike being able to draw with speed and safety upon the great arsenals of Rawal Pindi and Multan for military stores, and upon the rich country lying around Lahore for grain and flour, whilst every district has its own ample supply of commissariat cattle. Sukkur and Jacobabad, where the largest concentration of troops occurs, are doubly fortunate, in that they can also supply their needs with equal ease from Karachi and Bombay; and the same happy combination of road, rail, and river, which makes the supply and transport question as simple in our case as it is difficult in Russia's,[1] will give

[1] The Indus railway has but a single line, and runs through a barren land; yet it can by no means be classed with the hypothetical Russian Kandahar-Quetta railway

to our commanders the power of modifying their dispositions at an hour's notice to meet any change in the Russian plan of advance, such, for instance, as the diversion of a portion of the invading force from the Bolan to the Thal Chotiali route, or an abandonment of the march on Jacobabad in favour of one on the Indus ferry at Mithankot.

The collection and distribution of stores would be, of course, the Government of India's first concern, and every military post, from Peshawar to Sukkur, ought to

as a hindrance rather than a help to the movement of troops; because, firstly, running in either direction from any one of the strategical points which will require to be supplied and occupied, the pressure upon its carrying capacity is divided; because, secondly, it does not stop short half-way; because, thirdly, it is supplemented all along its course by a fair road and a splendid waterway; because, fourthly, the force to be moved by it is small in comparison with the Russian army of 150,000 men; and fifthly, because it lies entirely within our own territories, and is in no danger from the inhabitants, nor, except in the rains, from natural causes.—H. B. H.

have a couple of months' supplies in hand before the movement of the troops begins; and they, in their turn, having full command of trains and steamers (a steamer and its accompanying flat will convey a whole infantry regiment with its baggage down-stream, at the rate of from ten to fifteen miles an hour) should be carried to their respective destinations with such regularity and despatch, that there would be no necessity to expose them to sickness by moving them before the rains had ceased, the floods subsided, and the danger to health from the concentration of large bodies of men had, to a great extent, disappeared. There should be no difficulty in throwing 4000 to 5000 men daily into Sukkur, supposing them to make use of both river and rail, and to come partly from the Bombay Presidency, or from England direct, and partly from Multan and Lahore, where they would be replaced

by troops drawn from stations farther south; and they could be pushed on to Jacobabad, by rail and road, certainly at the rate of 3000 a day. The transport that would afterwards be required by the army in the field would more than suffice for the conveyance of the food and baggage of the regiments sent by road, as the distance between the two towns is so short, only 45½ miles, that the cavalry, at least, could accomplish it in two marches.

Jacobabad, the point where, as a reference to the map will show my readers, the Russian forces and our own must come into contact, is a strategical position of extraordinary importance, which we will suppose to have been rendered thoroughly strong by military science and skill. Standing on the edge of the desert, it completely covers both the railway and the raised causeway which connect it with Sukkur; and it also commands the road from Dadar, the frontier

road to Rajanpur, and the difficult and circuitous track from Quetta, *viâ* Kelat and the Mula Pass, which joins the Dadar route at Rajhan, one march north-west of Jacobabad, of which the Russians might avail themselves in order to relieve the congestion consequent on the passage of vast multitudes through a single narrow defile. Here, in addition to an extraordinary garrison of 5000, I have placed a force of 26,700 men of all arms, specially strong in cavalry and horse artillery, whose part it will be to push forward into the desert as far as Rajhan, where it will effectually hinder a junction of the invaders, supposing a portion of them to have been sent *viâ* Kelat, and will be ready to fall upon them at their weakest moment, when exhausted by fatigue and tormented with thirst, after a terrible march of 26½ miles. Day by day, as each Russian detachment straggles into sight, it will be attacked in

front by the infantry and artillery in extended order, and taken in flank by the cavalry, whilst a couple of regiments will be told off to sweep in such baggage as has escaped the ceaseless raids of our Beluch levies and of the Maris, Bughtis, and other predatory tribes, whose natural love of plunder will have been stimulated by promises of ample reward for services rendered to the British cause. A special service of mules, moving continually between the fortress and the camp, will keep our army well supplied with food, water, and forage for the horses.

Were there no Jacobabad to forbid all issue from the desert, Sukkur, where the North-West Railway crosses the Indus by a magnificent cantilever bridge covered by a strong *tête de pont*, and defended, probably, by armoured steamers carrying quick-firing guns, would be quite equal to the task of guarding the passage of that river, since, in addition to

the desert, it is protected by broad marshes[1] and by a perfect network of inundation canals. As things are, Sukkur's only function will be to give shelter to troops—all infantry and artillery—who may be required to reinforce Jacobabad or Rajanpur; for how are the Russians to get near it, even supposing us to have no army in the field? They cannot take Jacobabad by a *coup de main*; with starvation staring them in the face, they cannot afford time to reduce it by regular siege operations; they cannot invest it and cut off its supplies, because its cannon protect the railway and the road, and they cannot get behind it, except by the railway or the road, without plunging into a fetid swamp.[2] The

[1] 'The country as far as the eye could reach was a level swampy plain covered with low aquatic jungle and marsh grass.'—Report of Surgeon-General A. Smith, C.B.

[2] 'At the time of the passage of our troops the water had subsided, but the neighbourhood of the path was swampy, and in places very fetid, especially from putrid fishes left dry on the cessation of the inundations.'—*Ibid.*

only course left open to their commander is to mask Jacobabad, which he will hardly venture to do with less than 50,000 men, and, by making a detour through the desert, to reach the frontier road and march on the ferry at Mithankot, 133 miles away, with the certainty that before he can arrive there the division at Rajanpur will have been quadrupled in strength by reinforcements sent from Lahore, Multan, and Sukkur, and that the armoured steamers are following his movements and may be counted on to prevent his ever throwing a pontoon across the Indus.[1]

But no general, with hunger and disease decimating his ranks, and called upon each day to repel the attacks of a vigorous and active enemy, will ever mask Jacobabad and march on Mithankot. His real choice, if he ever got within sight of the former place,

[1] The Indus is deep at all seasons of the year, and between Dera Ghazi Khan and Sukkur there are no fords.

would be between surrender and retreat; and, considering the awful nature of the sufferings which would await the hapless multitudes, armed and unarmed, committed to his charge, were he to embrace the latter alternative, there can be little doubt that he would accept the former, when, indeed, trouble and danger would begin for us — trouble in filling such innumerable mouths, danger from the typhoid and cholera that would be raging among our prisoners.

Against these two sources of danger I should warn the Indian Government to make timely and ample provision, were it not that, as must be the case with all the preparations I have been describing, that provision would be made in vain. Again, and with redoubled boldness, I repeat my conviction, that we shall never have a Russian invasion of India to repel.

There is no *rushing* into such a military

enterprise as the one I have been picturing to my readers; its details must be worked out, its cost counted, years before it can be begun. The strength of the British position would be well known to the Russian strategists intrusted with the drawing up of the plan of campaign, and their own annals can assist them to judge of the condition in which their troops would arrive before it. Kaufmann's march upon Khiva, in the spring of 1873, when he and all his force were only saved from dying of thirst and fatigue by the timely intervention of a 'ragged Kirghiz,' who led them to some wells, and when, out of 10,000 camels, only 1200 lived to reach the Oxus; and the experience of the two columns which were despatched, the one from Tashkend to Jam, the other from Petro-Alexandrovska to Charjui, in June 1878, would suffice to lead them to correct conclusions on this crucial point, even without the two object-lessons with which

England has kindly furnished them in Afghanistan itself.

That Bengal column of the Indus army of 1839, of which mention has twice been made, must have reckoned on reaching Kandahar within a month and a half, for it took with it from Sukkur supplies for that length of time only, but it spent exactly nine weeks on the way; and from this miscalculation and from the incessant raids of Beluchis and Afghans, who carried off the laden camels from under the very noses of their escorts, it was reduced to the direst straits. During 48 days the mustered establishment (Government followers who, in the beginning, received the same allowance as the troops) were on half rations, and the troops themselves were on the same footing during 28 days; whilst, for the latter period of time, the private camp-followers, to whom, from the outset, only half the soldier's meagre fare was allotted, were

mulcted of the half even of that miserable pittance, and had to keep body and soul together on ½lb. of flour and ½oz. of dhal per diem.[1] The cavalry and artillery horses had had no grain for 27 days, and were in such a state of weakness on arriving at Kandahar that not a single troop was fit for detached duty.[2] History is silent as to the diet on which the transport animals were expected to bear their burdens, but it has preserved for us the fact that the 13,000 men composing the two columns of Sir J. Keane's army lost, in the space of a single year, 33,000 cattle of all descriptions, 10,983 of these being hired camels.

In the second Afghan War, on the three lines of advance, forces numbering less than

[1] 'Numbers of camp-followers were subsisting on fried skins of sheep, the coagulated blood of animals, and such roots as they could pick up in the neighbourhood of the encampments.'—*Memorials of Afghanistan*, by T. H. Stoequeler. The above facts are corroborated by Major Hough.

[2] *The March of the Indus Army*, by Major Hough.

36,000 men lost, as we have already seen, 50,000 camels in eleven months; and it took Sir D. Stewart's division of 7300 men 54 days to move from Sukkur to Kandahar, though there was no loitering by the way and only one skirmish with the tribes.

These facts, and others like them, must lead the Russian military experts to results differing materially from those which I have submitted to my readers. They would perceive that if *we* could not send an army through the Bolan and across the desert of Beluchistan in bodies of 3000 fighting men, with all that that term implies, neither could *they*; and would probably have to own that the commander would be lucky who could squeeze his troops through the one, and find water for them in the other, in detachments of half that size; and this single change in the factors of my calculation adds 50 days to the 100 which I assigned to the journey. Further, they would perceive, what indeed

I have already pointed out, that even a small army has, of necessity, its halts and its delays, and they could not hide from themselves the self-evident truth that a large force must be far more exposed to retarding influences than a little one; and so my second assumption that the Russians could move on in one unbroken stream, steadily advancing day by day, falls to the ground, and the 150 days to which the time occupied by the march has grown must be still further extended. But every additional day means additional supplies for a quarter of a million of men and a million animals of one kind or another; and every increase of supplies means an increase in the means of transport;[1] and every increase in the means of transport

[1] It means also a large increase in the number of camp-followers, since one muleteer must be allowed for every three mules, and one camel-man to the same number of camels used for the conveyance of regimental baggage, or to every four camels used for carrying commissariat stores.—H. B. H.

puts a fresh drag on the slow movements of the endless living train, winding painfully between mountain walls, or clinging to the narrow track leading from well to well. And they would have still to provide for the carriage of all those essential articles of food—meat, dead or alive, spirits, tea, sugar, hospital comforts, etc., which I have omitted from the dietary both of officers and men—for I have put all, from the highest to the lowest, on the same low scale,—and, this done, the insoluble problem of how to feed the camels that carry grain for the transport and baggage animals would remain to be faced; and yet another, at which I have hitherto only glanced, namely, how to time the invasion so as to avoid floods in the Bolan, deadly heat in the desert, and yet to reach India—not the wilderness which forms its outer zone, but the rich, populous India of their dreams—before the return of the hot weather shall close Beluchistan behind

them, leaving them, from the very outset of the campaign, cut off from all communication with their base. The margin is of the narrowest; for to reach Multan at the beginning of February, if the march is to take 180 days—and it cannot take less—the leading detachments must start early in August, which would bring them into the Bolan when innumerable torrents, born of the summer rains, are rushing down the mountain-sides, tearing great gaps in every road of man's construction, and filling the wide, stony channel of the river, which is the real passage through the defile—and into the desert, when it is in its most pestilential state; yet to delay till September means beginning their campaign in March, supposing our generals were to permit them to approach Multan, within a month of the date when the desert again becomes impassable for man and beast.

Can I now be accused of presumption if

I declare my conviction that the Russian Government, whose military advisers should lay before it all these facts and considerations, would abandon, once and for all, the dream of invading India, and turn its thoughts either towards indirect ways of injuring us and shaking our power in the East, or towards the more honourable measures by which—peace and good-will being established between two great Empires, separated from each other by the strong hand of Nature herself—both might profit by the good work already accomplished, or still to be accomplished, by each.

CHAPTER V

THE HINDU KUSH PASSES

From Faizabad to Peshawar, *viâ* the Dura and the Lahuri Passes, 373 miles ; and from Faizabad to Kashmir, *viâ* the Dura and the Borzil Passes, 629 miles.

FROM what distant regions the 30,000 men would originally be drawn, whom, in his plan of a general Russian advance upon India, Sir C. MacGregor assigned for the advance upon Peshawar by Chitral, and upon Kashmir, by Gilghit, is a question outside the scope of this inquiry; but there can be no doubt that the secondary base of forces invading India, by either route, would be at Faizabad, in Badakshan, a dilapidated town[1] on the Kokcha River, at the foot of

[1] Faizabad was destroyed by Morad Bey, Chief of Kunduz, in 1821, and when visited, many years later, by

the Hindu Kush, and that, in the second instance, they would come from Tashkend and Marghilan.

The Tashkend column, marching by way of Jam, would cross the Oxus by the Kilif ferry and proceed thence, by Balkh, Khulm (Tashkurghan), and Kunduz, to Faizabad, a journey of 618 miles, of the difficulties and hardships of which we can gain some idea by turning back to the Russian papers of 1878, and reading the accounts of the sufferings which, in its first stage alone, a Russian division has already endured. From them we learn what ravages the awful heat, the suffocating dust-storms, and the scarcity of water made among both troops and trans-

Lieutenant J. N. Wood, he found not a vestige of the ancient capital of Badakshan, save the withered trees which once adorned its gardens, and the dilapidated walls of a fort which was still standing on a rock commanding the entrance to the upper valley, here only 400 yards wide; since then, however, it has been partially restored. —H. B. H.

port animals, the latter dwindling away till they could scarcely meet the requirements of the military train and ambulance;[1] and there certainly cannot be less to bear between Jam and the Oxus, or on that strip of road, 57 miles long, between Kilif and Balkh, where the whole country is so cut up by irrigation channels that two of the marches are only three miles long, one five miles, and others hardly longer.

The Marghilan column, marching by way of Ush and the Alai Valley, would effect the passage of the Oxus at Samti Bala. This route, though very circuitous, is somewhat

[1] The miseries of these unhappy troops seem to have culminated on their arrival at Sarakul and Jam. 'Here began,' so wrote a correspondent of the *Sovrmenoi Izvesti*, 'privations which may well be termed diabolical. Imagine to yourself a perfectly level steppe, a heat of 49½ degrees Réaumur, and a hot wind, and it was in this climate we had to remain more than a month. . . . Dysentery, typhus fever, and sunstroke were the inevitable results of a sojourn in such a climate. Soldiers' funerals were to be witnessed every day.'

shorter than that previously described; still, 571 miles is a considerable distance, regarded as the preliminary stage of a military movement, and the rugged mountain ranges, over which it is carried, must double the time that would be required to accomplish it in an ordinarily open and level country.

A third route branching off from the Marghilan-Faizabad road, at the head of the Alai Valley, turns south over the Pamir Khargosh, crosses the Murghab River, traverses the Alichur and Little Pamir, runs down the Baroghil Pass, and lands the traveller in a district devoid of cultivation, grass, and fuel, with the choice of two paths open to him, the one leading to Chitral, the other to Gilghit; but this road I must decline even to consider: a handful of men might make their way along it, but handfuls of men are not armies, and it is with armies that our problem is concerned.

To return to Faizabad. Considering the

immense interval which separates that place from Tashkend and Marghilan, and the nature of the country through which it must be approached, I think it is safe to conclude that an army of any importance will take a whole summer to concentrate there. In addition, therefore, to the supplies necessary for the second stage of their expedition, which will be begun the following year, as soon as the snow has disappeared from the passes of the Hindu Kush, the Russian troops must carry with them, or find collected at Faizabad, a sufficiency of provisions to support themselves and their transport during the intervening winter and spring; and all supplies, whether intended for immediate or future use, must have been brought from afar, as they will not be procurable either in the city, or in the district in which it is situated; and I need not say that, to keep open the army's communications with Russia *viâ* Tashkend—those *viâ*

Marghilan would be lost in winter—the whole of Afghan Turkistan, which would have been conquered before either column began its advance, must be held in force, its chief cities being not only occupied, but connected together by a chain of fortified posts.

I will suppose that all these conditions have been fulfilled, and that the two Russian columns, their march safely accomplished, have spent the winter at Faizabad in peace and in tolerable comfort,—what is the task which would confront them when they again set themselves in motion?

They have, as we have seen, two objectives, Peshawar and Kashmir: can these be attained in the course of a single summer?

There are 41 marches from Faizabad to Gilghit, 19 to Chitral, and fourteen to the northern end of the Dura Pass, which is 14,800 feet high, only open for a little over three months in the year—let us say for a hundred

days—and so difficult, that, if I take 300 fighting men as the largest number that can cross it in a day, I shall probably be exaggerating.[1] By timing the start from Faizabad so as to bring the leading detachment to the foot of the pass the very day it becomes practicable, it will be just possible to get the whole 30,000 men clear of it before it is again closed by snow, and the first fifty detachments might concentrate at Gilghit on the 91st day, and the second fifty at Chitral on the 119th day. But between Gilghit and Kashmir are two formidable passes, the Borzil, 13,500 feet high, and the Hatu Pir, lower, but excessively difficult; and between Chitral and Peshawar there is the Lahuri Pass, 10,450 feet in height; so that farther advance by either route is impossible, and both columns must spend a second winter by

[1] There are three other passes between Badakshan and Chitral, viz. the Agram, Kharteza, and Nuksan, but these are covered with perpetual snow.—Mahamed Ameen.

the way. Much more than a winter, indeed, since the advance could not be resumed before the May of the following year; and during the whole twelve months that these 30,000 fighting men would be waiting or marching, they, and all the living creatures belonging to them, must be fed out of stores carried with them, or previously accumulated at Gilghit and Chitral, stores derived from that distant base, the locality of which we have not felt called upon to determine. Nay, more, provision must also have been made for the third stage of the movement, since there could be no lingering, after the southern passes were once more open, for fresh supplies to arrive; the advance must be immediate, the time in which it can be made being once again confined within very narrow limits.[1]

[1] Last year 55,000 maunds, equivalent to 27,500 mule loads of food-stuffs of all kinds, not including forage, were required for the provisioning of the 3000 troops within the limits of the Gilghit agency. It is possible that each mule

Many portions of the road from Faizabad to Chitral are swept, even in summer, by sudden and terrible storms, and the Kafir tribes bordering upon it are so fierce that the merchants who venture into these terrible regions absolutely prefer the Nuksan Pass to the Dura, though, in crossing it from the Badakshan side, they 'have to slide down upon the frozen snow on a leathern shirt, and ponies, if taken by this pass, are tied hands and feet, after having been relieved of their burden, and then rolled down upon the snow,' by which 'processes both men and beasts generally reach the base of the pass safely.'[1] Still, this march, as a whole, may be considered easy compared to that from Chitral to

made two journeys, but in the Russians' case, for every 3000 men 27,500 mules must be provided, since no second trip could be made within the time during which the Dura Pass remains open, and for the provisioning of 30,000, ten times that number of mules would be necessary. Where are 275,000 mules to be obtained? and if procurable, how are they to be fed?—H. B. H.

[1] Mahamed Ameen.

Gilghit. Two mountain tracks connect those two towns: the one *viâ* the Jhui Pass—14,812 feet high and very difficult—is quite impracticable; the other by Mastuj, the Shundur Pass, and Gakuch, although more direct and somewhat easier, bristles with difficulties, and to bring laden animals safely over it, the troops must be preceded by sappers and miners, who will have hard work to smooth away the worst of the obstacles.

And when the Russian columns, or what remains of them, and their transport quit their tertiary base, and enter upon the last stage of their mighty adventure, it will be to encounter equal difficulties and fatigues and greater dangers. The Lahuri Pass, between Chitral and Peshawar, is intersected again and again by the bed of the torrent which drains it, and in summer is strewn with the trunks and branches of deodar and pine uprooted by the previous winter's storms; whilst the low-lying, swampy

valleys[1] between the pass and British territory, always unhealthy, are during the hot weather unbearably close and sultry, more oppressive than the plains of India.

The leading Russian detachments would probably meet with strong resistance on the Lahuri and at Dir, a large mud fort covering the populous village of Arian Koh; and beyond Dir, in Swat, they would come into collision with the warlike Yusafzai Tribes, one of which, the Bunerwals, can put 8000 fighting men into the field.[2] They it was who,

[1] Large quantities of rice are grown in these valleys.—H. B. H.

[2] Lieutenant A. H. Mason, R.E., *Record of Expeditions against the North-West Frontier Tribes.* Colonel Warburton, however, estimates the Bunerwals fighting strength at 15,000. 'There is,' he says, 'no finer race in the north-west frontier of India than the Bunerwals. Simple and austere in their habits, religious and truthful in their ways, hospitable to all who seek shelter amongst them, free from secret assassinations, they are bright examples of what good materials a Pathan tribe can develop into, clinging with the fondest affection to their country, and ancient customs handed down to them by their forefathers.'

at the Ambela Pass in the year 1863, held 6032 British and Native troops, under Sir Neville Chamberlain, in check for nearly two months, inflicting upon them a loss in killed and wounded of 67 officers and 841 men. The expedition was not even directed against the Bunerwals, but against the refractory Hindustani fanatics who had settled at Malka; yet these independent and high-spirited mountaineers refused it a passage through their land. Are they more likely to grant one to Russian troops, who, hundreds of miles from their base, and broken up into weak detachments, would be far less capable of enforcing their demand?

And how are the invaders to cross the Swat, a deep and rapid river, 450 feet wide, from which every native skiff would have been removed, and dominated by the British fort of Abazai? Are we to suppose that an expedition which had needed three successive summers for its accomplishment,

would have been so successfully concealed from the Indian Government that no British force would be waiting to overwhelm the Russians as they set foot on British soil?

And beyond the Swat River and Fort Abazai is a branch of the Kabul River, fordable, indeed, except after heavy rain, but defended by Fort Shabkadar; and eight miles further still there is the Narguman branch of the same stream; and ten miles beyond that the large cantonment of Peshawar, connected by rail with every part of India. So that, by this route as by the Bolan, the only question for *us* would be where to crush our foes, and, for *them*, whether death or surrender should be their choice; and if they were 50,000 strong instead of 15,000, with the facilities for concentrating troops at Peshawar which we possess, the result must still be the same.

The road from Gilghit to Kashmir is

much better known than that from Chitral to Peshawar, but, in this case, familiarity has not bred contempt. 'No one who has not visited these inhospitable regions,' so wrote in 1893 a traveller[1] who has a wide personal experience of them, 'can fully realise the difficulties which beset the organisation of even the smallest military expedition. The road from Kashmir to Gilghit, roughly, is 240 miles in length, and traverses, for the most part, a practically desert country. All supplies have to be carried up from Kashmir, while even the grass to feed transport animals has to be brought from a distance. In the summer the heat in the arid gorges is intense, and in some of the waterless marches the bones of dead mules are a frequent sight. The road becomes impassable in early winter (October), for two passes have to be crossed, both liable to sudden

[1] Mr. E. F. Knight, the author of *Where Three Empires Meet.*

gales of deadly coldness, which surprise and kill numbers of travellers every year. Last autumn one of these gales, accompanied by a snowstorm, destroyed a whole train of 300 mules, together with their drivers.'

A similar disaster which happened in the Borzil Pass, in the middle of October 1891, will be still fresh in the memory of many of my readers, when a detachment of Goorkhas, under Captain Barnett, was caught in a blizzard. About 100 men and followers, Barnett amongst the number, were frost-bitten, many of whom died afterwards at Astor, while the hands and feet of others dropped off. Their gallant leader, after a protracted illness, recovered, not however without the loss of several toes.

The prospect of such dangers and hardships will quicken the movements of the Gilghit column, and it would be pleasant for them, on arriving on the north-east margin

of Lake Wular, to take to the water and float quietly down to Srinagar; but I fear they would hardly find boats waiting to convey them. Whether they approach that city, however, by land or by water, they will certainly enter it only as prisoners of war, for to have assembled there a force of double their strength, would have been no excessive strain on the resources of the Indian Government, especially if, by the date of our hypothetical Russian invasion, that government had ceased to value railways in proportion to their uselessness and unremunerativeness, and had constructed that line from Rawal Pindi to Kashmir, the plans and estimates for which have long been in its possession.

There are really two routes from Chitral to Peshawar, but as the second joins the Khyber at Jelalabad, and the mouth of the Khyber will have been sealed by that fortified camp, in the teeth of which Sir E.

Hamley failed to see how a single Russian regiment could ever issue from that deep and narrow gorge, it would be waste of time to describe it here; but it will not be useless to recall the terms in which the above-named strategist spoke of the expectation that, through it, danger might some day threaten India.

Why, he asked, in a lecture to which I have more than once referred—why should Russia push her forces to the sources of the Oxus, cross the Hindu Kush, and march 250 miles down the Kunar Valley to reach Kabul or the Khyber, when she could attain either objective by shorter and better roads? If she held the less difficult, she would have no need to use the more difficult roads; and if she did not hold the former, she could not risk an advance by the latter. Why, then, should she be supposed capable of entering 'on such an enterprise by such a line'?

Why, indeed? And why should she be expected to commit the same folly by any other circuitous and hopelessly difficult route? The answer is simple: Because we English are fools: not the Russian Government—that is wise enough in its generation, and has no more idea of invading India by the Hindu Kush than of organising an expedition for the conquest of Canada *viâ* Siberia, though to further her general policy of inducing us to weaken our military position in India, by scattering our troops over an enormous and almost inaccessible area, and our political position, by forcing us to tax our Indian subjects to the last limit of their patience and their purse, she sends from time to time a score or two of Cossacks to do a little hunting and exploring in those uncomfortable regions.

It is enough to make any reasonable Englishman blush with shame, to think that the well-being of our Indian Empire is being

sacrificed to absurd and ignorant fears—fears that are making of England the cat's-paw of the government whose aims she is supposed to be circumventing, and the laughing-stock of every foreign military man who happens to turn his attention to such remote and negligeable places as Chitral, or Gilghit, or the Pamirs.

I know well the arguments by which this weak and foolish policy is defended: that we must keep the coming struggle well away from our own borders; that we must carry war into the enemy's country; that we must reduce to submission all the petty tribes of which we have ever heard the name, lest, in our hour of danger, they should pour down from their hills and divide and break our strength. But I claim to have shown that, so far as Russia is concerned, the often predicted struggle could not touch the outermost fringe of our Indian Empire, and that we can no more carry war into her dominions

than she into ours; and as regards disturbances that may arise within our own borders, I believe I can dissipate that anxiety also, or at least prove that it derives most of its probability and all its real force from the very measures that we are asked to think necessary to its relief. But this subject, no less important than that to which the present paper has been devoted, must wait till, in Tract No. 2, I have examined the frontier with which India is at this moment blessed, and that wider frontier, to which the most anxious of her many anxious friends, from Lord Lytton and Sir George Colley down to Lord Roberts and Mr. George Curzon, have invited her to look forward as the best security that their military and political foresight can promise her; and have submitted to my readers many curious and instructive facts with regard to the defensive works—fortifications, strategic roads and strategic railways—which are